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A *KAVA* CEREMONY IN TONGA.

By the Rev. M. A. Rugby Pratt.

114 [The writings of W. H. R. Rivers and others have raised the *kava* complex to a position of theoretical importance in the study of Polynesian ethnology. The following very detailed account of the ceremonial preparation of *kava* in the Tongan Group is, therefore, of great interest. Such a ceremonial as is here recorded is now rare in those islands, and many members of modern *kava* parties scarcely know the right positions to take up, much less the details of the ceremonial.—Editor.]

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THE ceremonial way of making *kava* is called *milolua*, a word that is also employed to describe one method of straining, or "clearing" the *kava*. The fact that on two occasions the full ceremony was carried through for my benefit was due to the circumstance that I was the guest of the Rev. J. B. Watkin, who, for fifty-six years has laboured as a missionary in the Friendly Islands, and won the fullest confidence and love of the Tongan people.

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123 On the morning of Thursday, August 17th, 1922, accompanied by my host and the Native minister from Neiafu, the Rev. Paula Fonua, I [114] set out from Neiafu, the capital of Vavau, for the village of Haalaufuli, some eight miles distant. Some two miles before reaching Haalaufuli we were met by a small cavalcade, and the horsemen escorted us to the village. Here we were received at the Mission House, and, having seated ourselves on the *lotoa*, or verandah, a dried *kava* root was laid at our feet, and a small offering of food was presented to us for some visitors who had followed us from Neiafu. This over, Mr. Watkin and I stepped into the Mission House and sat at a table laden with roast chicken, boiled chicken, curried chicken, fried chicken, roast sucking pig, and a profusion of fruit, vegetables and other good things. The only detail that I need mention is that we began the meal with a drink of hot coconut milk, that was served in cups made from folded banana leaf, a beverage that is heated in the *umu*, or oven of hot stones, and which, when poured into the green banana-leaf cup extracts from the cup some essential properties which produce a delightfully cool sensation in mouth and throat.

The meal over, we again repaired to the *lotoa* to be garlanded with exquisitely made floral *sisi*, to hear words of welcome, to hold a levee and to receive the customary gifts. There were two presentations. The first was a *koloa*, or presentation of goods, which included native mats, *tapa* cloth, coconut oil, necklaces made of *hano*, *lopa* and

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sialemohemohe seeds, and also a few fans. The second was a *kaitunu* or food presentation. Included in this latter were six great green *kava* roots, nine roast pigs borne on *pola* or litters, scores of baskets of fruit and vegetables, bunches of the prized *taokave* or chiefly coconuts, many fowls, and a quantity of *ai* nuts, not unlike almonds, that were both in baskets and threaded on the stripped ribs of fronds of the coconut palm. The gifts in the second presentation were arranged in orderly rows on the *malae*. These were duly counted by representatives of the villages, who seated themselves behind the company and announced the number of each sort of gift. The food was then removed from the *malae*, or assembly ground, saving that five roast pigs were placed in order in front of the *lotoa*. Behind these pigs a party of natives seated themselves, with crossed legs, beneath the shade of an *ovava* tree, the sacred tree of Tonga. The chiefs and some distinguished folks were ranged at the feet of Mr. Watkin and myself on the *lotoa*, we two alone being accommodated with chairs.

In the centre of the group, on the *malae*, a woven mat was placed over a plaited coconut *pola*. On either side of the mat sat two men, called *kagai kava*, facing the *lotoa*. Beside each was a large, smooth volcanic stone, and in the right hand of each a smaller volcanic stone. These stones, valuable for their hardness, are brought from the island of Tofua. A green *kava* root was produced, the upper shoots, resembling bamboo sticks, were discarded, and the root itself was scraped and rubbed clean, and then passed to the *kagai kava*. Ordinarily the dried and not the green *kava* root is used for making the beverage. Next a native advanced bearing a *kumete kava* or *kava* bowl, set on four short legs. Before being put in position between the *kagai kava*, it was turned to the guests of honour, with the legs and bottom facing us. The *kagai kava* quickly pounded the root with the hard volcanic stones, the crushed pieces falling upon the mat. When the crushing was complete the broken fragments were put in the *kumete kava*, behind which a handsome woman, the *gaahi kava*, or *kava* maker, now seated herself. In more ancient days the practice was for the crushed root to be distributed amongst the young folks who possessed the whitest teeth, and who, when they had masticated the chips, discharged the contents of their mouths on to a plantain leaf, whence it was transferred to the *kava* bowl. This unhygienic method is now discarded.

The *gaahi kava* with graceful sweeps and curves of arms and hands and body, all movements of symbolic import, began to mix the root and to extract its essence, the while the two *kagai kava* simultaneously poured water slowly from two buckets into the bowl. When she had made the liquor of sufficient strength, a strainer, which was simply a bunch of fibre or *fau*, was brought and spread by the *gaahi kava* on top

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276 574 415 of the "brew." In this strainer the *kava* maker, with graceful movements, carefully gathered the "chips" out of the liquor, winding the fibre around them and wringing from it the last drops of fluid, as she did so, gradually raising the strainer until it was stretched like a rope above her head. Holding it there for a few moments she suddenly, 276 574 and quick as a flash, without so much as a glance backward, flung the mass into the lap of a man behind, and, exhausted by her strenuous exercises, brought her arms to rest, with hands outstretched and palms uppermost on the outer edge of the *kumete kava*. The man who received the bunch of strainings, at once shook them out on a mat in front of him and began dividing the *fau* into two parts.

At the same moment a party of men advanced and with ceremonial dignity bore away the five roast pigs that had been left between us and the *kava* makers. The division of the *fau* being completed one part was returned to the *gaahi kava*, who, with pretty movements gathered into it any dregs or fibrous particles that still remained in the liquor. When the fluid was "cleared" the strainer was exchanged for the rest of the *fau*. This was placed in a bunch on the front lip of the bowl, and then, announcing that the *kava* was ready, the woman brought her arms once again, with open, upturned palms, to rest on the outer lips of the bowl.

[415] Three cup-bearers, called *fakatau kava*, now stepped forward, each holding an *eibu* or cup, fashioned from a coconut shell. The master of ceremonies, who was close to me on the *lotoa*, and who is called the *tufa kava*, gave orders to proceed. One of the cupb-earers advanced to the *gaahi kava* and she saturated the *fau* with the liquor and squeezed a cupful into the *eibu*. The bearer advanced some seven paces and stood still, facing the guests of honour. One of the party called the *ui kava*, or crier, "intoned" with a very prolonged note on the last syllable but one, the announcement "*Kava kua heka*," indicating in this way that the cup was filled. Thh *tufa kava* named the person to whom it was to be presented. This person at once intimated to the cup-bearer that he was the individual named, by clapping the hands together once and saying the word "*koau*," which is simply the first personal pronoun. The bearer, holding the *eibu* in both hands, advanced with stately step, and with ceremonious politeness presented the cup, holding it as low as he could, in token of respect. The person honoured took the *eibu* in both hands, and quaffed its contents, or if he preferred, merely sampled the *kava*, and then returned the cup.

Cup-bearer number two then had his *eibu* filled by the *gaahi kava* squeezing the saturated *fau*. He advanced, as had his predecessor, a few paces and stood still awaiting a command. The *ui kava* intoned his announcement that the *eibu* was filled, the *tufa kava* called a name, the hand-clapping and drinking followed, and so the ceremony proceeded until some forty persons had been honoured and the *kava* was

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exhausted. The *gaahi kava* wiped the bowl clean with her bunch of *fau* and again brought her arms to rest on either side edge of the bowl. A member of the party now advanced, lifted the bowl, and holding its inner surface towards the guests of honour, slapped it on its under side and bore it from the scene. The whole *kava* ceremony thus described in detail, occupied less than forty minutes, and was followed by a dinner from the food that had ceremonially been presented to me.

After the dinner the whole company marched in procession to the beautiful Free Church building. Here some seven choirs, drawn from the five villages of Haalanfuli, Hologa, Houma, Taanea and Magia united in a *hiva*, or song service. Fourteen anthems were rendered, two by each choir. The singing was a revelation, and was without any instrumental accompaniment, and without the aid of the printed score, or any printed word. Most of the selections were by native composers, and these showed considerable merit. Two selections, however, were quite familiar. They were the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's "Messiah," and "Glorious is Thy Name."

One of the chiefs present at these celebrations was a Native doctor, Mr. George Kubu, who is uncle of Queen Salote, and a brother of the late Queen Lavinia, of Tonga. Two days later I visited his village of Hologa, and he, having noted my interest in the *milolua*, or *kava* ceremony, had arranged for its repetition in my honour. At this second ceremony, which was preceded by the singing of an ode of welcome, that had been originally composed and sung to welcome to Hologa, the late King George Tubou II. several years ago, the whole party was seated under a *balebule nofoaga*, or shelter, that had been temporarily erected on the *malae*. The ceremony was the introduction to a feast, and it differed from the previous *milolua* in the fact that the *kava* maker was a man, and the cup-bearers were women. On numerous occasions I saw *kava* made with as little ceremony and as much haste as possible, and count myself favoured to have witnessed a ceremony that few are now privileged to see.